

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

We write to express our deep concern about the detention and deportation of Southeast Asian refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In recent years, we have seen a spike in the arbitrary detention and removal of lawful permanent residents who came to the United States as refugees fleeing the violence and genocide from the Vietnam War and the Khmer Rouge genocide. We urge you to cease detentions and deportations of refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Many of those impacted were born in refugee camps and have never set foot in the countries to which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is trying to remove them. Upon arrival into the United States, many were resettled into struggling neighborhoods. Still coping with significant trauma from the war, some of these refugees made mistakes as teenagers and young adults and were funneled into the criminal justice system. All of them served their time, and the majority transformed their lives to become productive community members, business owners, and loving parents supporting their U.S citizen families. They have checked in dutifully with ICE, some for decades, only now to be suddenly arrested, detained, and deported.

We are concerned that the recent retaliatory visa sanctions from the Trump Administration pressuring Cambodia and Laos to accept deported people have propelled these mass detentions and deportations. Additionally, we are also concerned that the Administration's reinterpretation of the 2008 bilateral agreement between the United States and Vietnam will also lead to increased detentions and deportations of Vietnamese Americans.¹ The biggest round up of Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants for deportation took place in 2017.² Cambodia is currently on target to see record-breaking deportation numbers in 2018.³

¹ Charles Dunst & Krishnadev Calamur, *Trump Moves to Deport Vietnam War Refugees*, THE ATLANTIC (Dec. 12, 2018) available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/12/donald-trump-deport-vietnam-war-refugees/577993>.

² Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, "Cambodian Deportations to Begin" (Dec. 6, 2017) available at: <http://www.searac.org/our-voices/press-room/press-release-cambodian-deportations-begin>.

³ Kimberly Yam, *ICE Depports Another Refugees While You Weren't Paying Attention*, HUFFINGTON POST (Aug. 21, 2018) available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/us-deports-cambodian-refugees_us_5b7707b9e4b05906b4135dea

It is troubling to see Southeast Asian American families being targeted at unprecedented levels. We urge you to reexamine policies on the arbitrary detention and deportation of Southeast Asian Americans who prove no threat to public safety, are interwoven into our communities, and support U.S. citizen families. We urge you to use prosecutorial discretion to ensure that our finite resources are not being wasted to tear families apart and deport individuals who have transformed their lives after serving their sentences. Further, we request that you set up a briefing on your discussions with Vietnam, in particular to provide information on any deal with Vietnam to accept deported refugees.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact Krystal Ka'ai (krystal.ka'ai@mail.house.gov) or Jennifer Chan (jennifer.chan@mail.house.gov) to set up a briefing to address these questions no later than December 27, 2018.

Sincerely,


JUDY CHU
Member of Congress


PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress


EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress


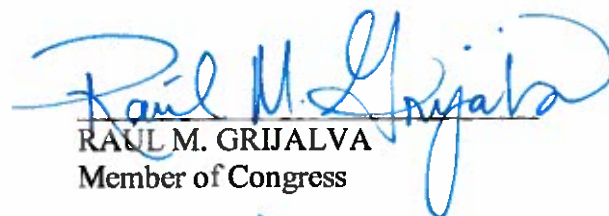


SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

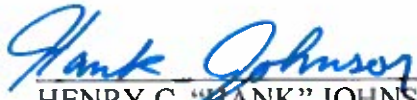

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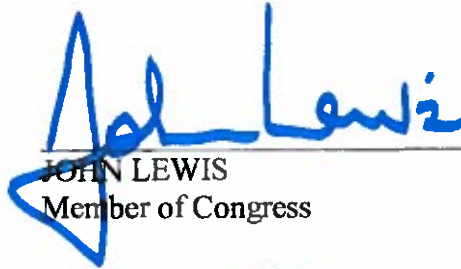
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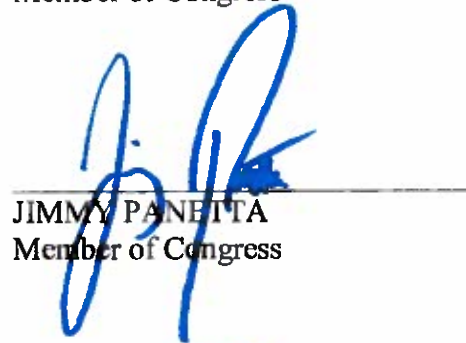
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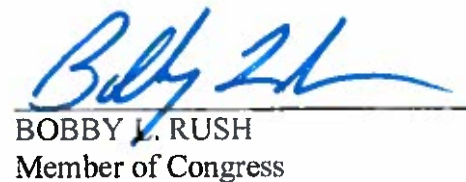
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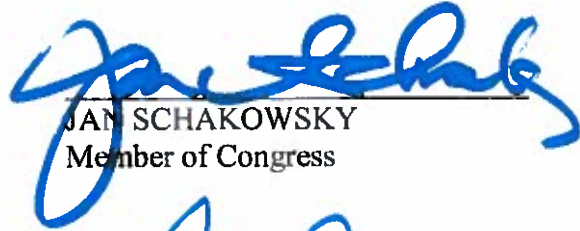
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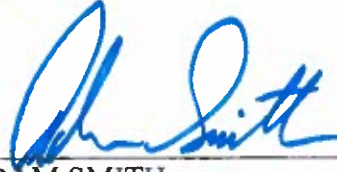
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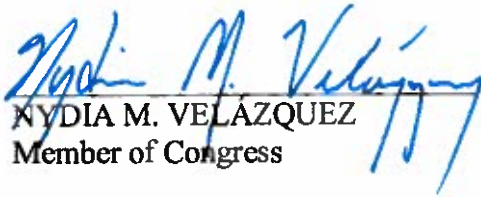
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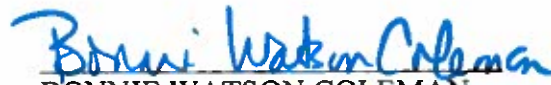
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